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ABSTRACT

This investigation focused on the question of the sex of the teacher and perceptions of primary school students toward school, their teachers, and programs. A review is presented of recent studies on the need and availability of male sex role symbols for boys, the effect of teachers (male or female) on students of both sexes, and the effect of teachers (male or female) on black students. An analysis of the reports from these studies concludes with the suggestions that: (1) schools need to develop environments and programs of study that reduce stereotyped roles; (2) primary school teachers need preservice and inservice assistance in creating and implementing environments that positively encourage children of both sexes; (3) teachers of both genders should be made available as role models; and (4) the employment of minority persons of both sexes in schools should be encouraged. It is emphasized that teachers' behavior and expectations of students, regardless of their sex or racial origin, are key elements in effective primary education. (JD)

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ABSTRACT

Charles A. Sloan and James Cunneen

IN QUEST OF THE BEST PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHER:

Which gender will you offer a tender?

Does gender affect minority students?

There has been a continuous debate in American education about the desirability of males teaching in the lower elementary grades. The debate has centered on several issues, such as:

1. The need and availability of male sex role symbols for boys.
2. The affect of teachers, male or female, on students of both sexes.
3. The affect of teachers, male or female, on students of minority groups. This study centered only on black students.

This investigation focused on the question of the sex of the teacher and perception of selected primary aged students toward school, their teachers and programs. A brief review of selected literature concerning male teachers was presented. The authors concluded that the teachers' behavior and their expectations of students, regardless of sex (of the teacher) or racial origin, are key elements. Persons who match these criterion and are knowledgeable teachers should be encouraged and retained as instructors of young children.

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IN QUEST OF THE BEST PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHER:

Which gender will you offer a tender?

Does gender affect minority students?

Charles A. Sloan and James Cunneen

There has been a continuous debate in education for centuries (May 1971) about the desirability of males teaching in lower elementary grades. In more recent history, particularly in the late forties, Kaplan (1947) stated that it should be the policy of the school system to place men in the upper elementary grades and not in the lower elementary grades. Tubbs, (1946) suggested that men would be suspect if they showed a desire to teach in the early elementary grades. This attitude continued well into the fifties where both teachers and administrators expressed their desires to keep men away from the early primary grades (Thurman, 1959).

These attitudes changed in the sixties and seventies. Currently men are considered to be an asset as teachers in the early elementary grades. The rationale for the change to hire men for teaching in the early grades came from two diametrically opposed viewpoints. One opinion group desired to reinforce the male's role while another group has wanted to break-down sex stereotypes by having males in traditional female roles (Pleck, 1975).

There have been numerous written opinions about the value of hiring male teachers in the lower grades. Some of these ideas center on the male teachers themselves. Investigations of the masculinity of early grade male teachers have found no differences to exist with their upper-grade counterparts (Bredenkapp & Goering, 1971). Robinson (1981) investigated how males fitted into the traditional female dominated field of early childhood

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education with few observed differences. Also, there have been numerous authors who have extolled the simple fact that they had males on their faculty rosters was important in itself (Kendall, 1972). Some articles read like recruitment posters for men in the early grades. (Seifert, 1973 and Vairo, 1969).

The main concern for school administrators must continue to be the affect male teachers have on young children in school. It seems clear that a problem does exist for boys in the early grades. Although it is generally accepted that no sex differences are apparent with respect to intelligence, boys do have more academic problems in the early years of school than girls (Maccoby, 1974). Brophy and Goode (1973) reviewed findings that provided at least an indirect support for the idea that female teachers favor girls over boys. They caution the reader, however, that none of these studies directly compared the affect of male teachers with female teachers. The studies that did make sex comparison have produced some surprising findings. There are research reports which have not promoted the necessity of employing male teachers in the elementary grades, for example: Clapp (1967) found male teachers had no affect on fifth grade reading achievement scores. Asher and Gottman (1972) also studied reading achievement over a two year period and found no significant difference for boys taught by male teachers with boys taught by female teachers. Lahadorne and Cohen (1970) compared male and female teachers in a number of areas and found that there were few differences in respect to the teacher. They discovered that when there was a difference, it favored the female teacher. Brophy and Laosa (1971) compared a male-female kindergarten team with a female only team and found little difference in the two groups.

Two studies favoring male teachers were found. First, Shinodling and Pederson (1970) in a small sample found boys taught by male teachers scoring better on reading achievement than boys taught by female teachers. In a slightly larger sample, Shapiro (1980) found that second grade boys expressed more positive attitudes toward reading when taught by male teachers than when taught by female teachers.

One of the major concerns for boys in the early grades is how they perceive their school environment. Kohlberg (1966) stated that once a boy has categorized himself as masculine he then values positively those objects that he classifies as masculine. Kagen (1964) tested children classifying school related objects and found girls labeling school related objects feminine more than boys label school related objects masculine. Cunneen (1982) studied the affect that male teachers had on children labeling school related objects. In this study with 720 students (see Tables 1 and 2) in the sample he found that male teachers had no affect on boys labeling school objects and male teachers had a negative affect on girls. He also found that girls label more objects feminine than boys label school related objects masculine.

May (1971) cited the desirability to investigate the needs for black children to be exposed to male teachers. He claimed that there is a prevalent matriarchal structure among black families. He also stated that, "boys find it difficult to identify with a positive male image and carry this problem to a female dominated school." Further, Vairo (1969) cited the academic difficulty that minority students experience in school. Also, he suggested that women play an exagerated importance and role model in the early years of a child. He implied that the contact with female only teachers reinforces this problem. Because of this question, additional study of

sex role classification centering on minority students was conducted by the authors. It was found (Tables 3 and 5) that in testing minorities only, male teachers did not have an affect on boys labeling school related objects. Also, when minority students were compared to the remainder of the population no statistical differences between the two groups were evident (Tables 3,4, and 6). Hence, we cannot endorse the claim that minority boys require male primary teachers.

The current "state-of-the-art" suggests that, although there are many differences between boys and girls in the early grades and there are also some differences between male and female teachers, the differences appear to cancel themselves out! Brophy and Good (1973) stated that boys and girls grow-up differently and girls seem to adapt better to the passive student role. Therefore, teachers, both male and female, appear to reinforce this well defined role. It is our thesis that the role of the teacher must change in order to assist boys in the early elementary grades. Moreover, the atmosphere of the school must change in order to accommodate behavior that does not excentuate only the passive model student roles. A good teacher, regardless of sex, can do this! Hence, it would be considered thoughtless to offer contracts to prospective teachers because of gender alone. A review of recent studies and our own research indicates the men simply by being male have little affect on boys in the primary grades. Administrators must seek "the effective teacher", regardless of sex, who can best serve all students. Also, special consideration should be given to the nature of the schools' programs. Further, we agree that the feminization of elementary schools (Brophy and Good 1973) will continue unless positive assertive changes occur. In summary, our current analysis and suggestions are as follows:

1. Schools need to develop environments and programs of study that reduce stereotypic roles. These programs would emphasize both

quiet and active activities and increased sex role participation.

2. Persons preparing to teach in primary schools need preservice and inservice assistance in creating and implementing environments that positively encourage children of both sexes.
3. Teachers of both genders should be made available as role models. This would be particularly desirable if their behaviors and attitudes relate appropriately to the desired behavior to implement a wide variety of classroom instruction.
4. The employment of minority persons of both sexes in schools should be continually encouraged. The presence of minority persons of both sexes will encourage the social development of the sexes and our total society.

In summary, it appears to us that the teachers' behavior and their expectations of students, regardless of their sex or racial origin, are key elements. Persons who match these criterion and are knowledgeable teachers should be encouraged and retained as instructors of young children.

About the authors:

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TABLE 1

MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATION FOR SCHOOL-RELATED OBJECTS INSTRUMENT

	Grade 2		Grade 3		Grade 4		Total	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Male Teacher Girl	6.067	1.65	6.233	1.57	6.820	1.40	6.372	1.59
Male Teacher Boy	6.133	1.77	5.250	1.92	4.867	1.69	5.420	1.86
Female Teacher Boy	5.517	1.78	4.967	1.88	4.933	1.60	5.139	1.63
Female Teacher Girl	5.800	1.44	7.033	1.38	7.450	1.60	6.61	1.63
Average	5.88	1.67	5.87	1.89	6.01	1.58	5.92	1.83

TABLE 2

ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE, SEX CONGRUENCY WITH TEACHER SEX - CHILD SEX AND GRADE

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Significance of F
Main Effects					
T Sex	.556	1	.556	1.0	.651
C Sex	299.022	1	299.022	110.063	.001
Grade	3.219	2	1.610	1.0	.5553
2-way					
T sex-C sex	20.000	1	20.000	7.361	.007*
T sex-Grade	22.503	2	11.251	4.141	.016*
C sex-Grade	140.486	2	70.234	25.855	.001
3-way					
T sex-C sex	4.258	2	2.129	1.0	.457
Residual	1923.52	708	2.717		
Total	2413.56	719	3.357		

Note: Level of Significance was .05.
* are significant results
T = Teacher Sex
C = Child Sex

Table 3

Means for Simple Effects, Minority Students - By Sex and Teachers by Sex

Students	Teachers						
	Male			Female			
	N[1]	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	N[1]	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	Total
Boys	32	5.59	1.34	32	5.19	1.23	5.39
Girls	32	6.03	1.13	32	6.72	1.21	6.38
Total	64	6.38		64	5.95		

1 = N was 32 per cell for a total of 128 students: 64 boys and 64 girls.

Table 4

Means Simple Effects, Non-Minority Students By Sex and Teacher By Sex

Students	Teachers						
	Male			Female			
	N[1]	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	N[1]	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	Total
Boys	148	5.38	1.86	148	5.13	1.63	5.26
Girls	148	6.44	1.59	148	6.58	1.63	6.51
Total	296	5.91		296	5.85		

1 = N was 148 per cell or a total of 592 students: 296 boys and 296 girls.

Table 5

SIMPLE EFFECTS ANOVA, TEACHER BY STUDENT SEX
FOR MINORITY STUDENTS

Source	S.S.	D.F.	M.S.	F.	S.
Teacher for Boys	2.56	1	2.56	<1	NS
Teacher for Girls	7.84	1	7.84	2.88	N.S.
Students for Male Teacher	7.84	1	7.84	2.88	N.S.
Students for Female Teacher	37.92	1	37.94	13.92	S

S.S. = sum of the differences squared
D.F. = degrees of freedom
M.S. = sum of the differences squared/degrees of freedom
F. = M.S./Error term of 2.717
S. = significant at the .05 level

Table 6

SIMPLE EFFECTS ANOVA FOR MINORITY AND NON MINORITY
STUDENTS BY SEX AND SEX OF THE TEACHER

Source	S.S.	D.F.	M.S.	F.	S.
	Students - Boys				
Non-minority for teacher	17.76	1	17.76	6.55	S.
Minority for teacher	2.56	1	2.56	<1	N.S.
Male teacher for students	1.16	1	1.16	<1	N.S.
Female teacher for students	.156	1	.156	<1	N.S.
	Students - Girls				
Non-minority for teacher	.739	1	.739	<1	N.S.
Minority for teacher	7.84	1	7.84	2.88	N.S.
Male teacher for students	4.42	1	4.42	1.63	N.S.
Female teacher for students	.38	1	.38	<1	N.S.

S.S. = sum of the differences squared
D.F. = degrees of freedom
M.S. = sum of differences squared/degrees of freedom
F. = M.S./Error Term 2.717
S. = significant at the .05 level